

WA Health Translation Network

COVID-19 Research Collaboration

Minutes

Monday 15 June 2020, 3.00pm – 4.00pm

Via Zoom

<https://www.wahtn.org/wa-covid-19-research-coordination/>

1. Welcome and update

Gary Geelhoed welcomed members of the WAHTN Management Committee (who were previously not all included in the COVID-19 Research Collaboration) and noted that he has decided to use these meetings as a way of communicating with all WAHTN members, for the interim, in lieu of the Management Committee meetings.

Minutes

The Minutes from this meeting and all previous meetings are circulated as quickly as possible and uploaded to the WAHTN COVID-19 website.

2. Funding

The current and future funding opportunities are summarised as follows:

\$3million from the WA Department of Health has been distributed.

A review of the Project Grants will be reviewed shortly to ascertain if the projects are still applicable with the current COVID-19 research requirements. Some funding may be re-purposed for other studies and projects.

\$6million announcement on new funds is now available as the Western Australian Future Fund has been repurposed for Research and Innovation.

\$5million funding was also announced will be used to support the DETECT streams with some funds available for future research.

The mining industry may want to support WAHTN and the COVID-19 Research Collaboration, discussions are ongoing, however this may also be an opportunity for researchers.

3. Updates from Key Areas

COVID-19 Research Response (CRR) (Merrilee Needham)

The CRR emphasis will now focus towards the recovery and immune response via the COVID-19 Immunity Collaboration, initiated by Dominic Mallon. This change in emphasis reflects the small numbers of COVID-19 patients.

CIVIC (Chris Reid)

The CIVIC activities are continuing. The surveys have been finalised and the strategy is now to focus on specific target groups, including higher educational workers and other key areas, particularly looking at the public health response for COVID-19.

To date, 41 companies are actively participating in the CIVIC FIFO programs. The team are ensuring those companies are adhering to protocols accordingly through effective dialogue with the WA Department of Health.

CIVIC is looking into the initiatives around the potential for collaborative projects across Australia, given the second round of funding opportunities. There is capacity for joint collaborative projects that would have a systematic approach monitoring the outcomes post COVID-19 to establish a national picture. Chris Reid will provide additional information as these initiatives develop.

Mental Health (Sean Hood)

The mental health group have been contributing to the surveys which are feeding into the CIVIC surveys.

In addition, the mental health COVID-19 response panel have been meeting weekly due to the MRFF Mental Health funding opportunity. The application is currently being drafted. The group have dialogue with the Mental Health Commission through Andrew Page to establish how they can collaborate to leverage and capitalise on the unique cross university of this unified group.

Telehealth Collaboration Project (Fiona Wood)

The joint eHealth Design Workshop is scheduled on Thursday 25 June, 12pm – 2pm and will be held virtually. Invitations will be sent out shortly.

Representation will be broad including consumers, clinical experts, infrastructure, governance experts and innovators into a design workshop that is focusing on future e-health patient experience.

COVID-19 Immunity Collaboration

Dominic Mallon was not available to attend the meeting, however, Gary Geelhoed informed the group that the COVID-19 Immunity Collaboration is concentrating on assessing travellers coming to WA as the borders are opened. For instance will IgG levels allow someone to be deemed free of disease and immune?

Consumer and Community (Deb Langridge)

The WAHTN Consumer and Community Research Network has been involved with the planning for the Telehealth Collaboration Project.

The team are in the final stages of analysing the results from the COVID-19 consumer survey related to consent. An open forum will be held to inform this group of the findings. Save the date will be sent to circulate shortly.

Australian National Phenome Centre (ANPC) (Jeremy Nicholson)

The work of the ANPC to date relating to COVID-19 is summarised as follows:

New COVID-19 data has been received for the limited number of cases in WA and the ANPC has completed the first set of modelling.

Various publications are in progress (approx. 4), one in particular, is focusing on the metabolic profile related to diabetes and the viral causes. At this stage, it is unclear if the profile is similar to gestational diabetes, i.e. does it reverse or not.

The ANPC has been provided with several hundred samples from the University of Cambridge, School of Medicine, allowing a coordinated metabolic phenotyping research approach. The plan is to follow up the recovered patients for 1 year. The study has full serology background and viral genomics which is classified as a deluxe set of data.

The ANPC has been granted an Import licence from Department of Agriculture for COVID-19. The first for Australia. There is a large amount of serology available.

Spinnaker Health Research Foundation has awarded the ANPC funding totalling \$500,000 to investigate the recovered patients in the community and ascertain if their biochemistry is indeed “recovered”.

Moving forward, there will be opportunities to collaborate with different speciality areas ie cardiovascular, neurological, inflammatory etc.

Peter Richmond queried if the ANPC patients will be linked to the COVID-19 Immunity Collaboration. Jeremy Nicholson confirmed that the ANPC is happy to discuss further with individual groups.

FAST (Flow cytometer-assisted Antimicrobial Susceptibility Testing)

Gary Geelhoed informed members of the work Tim Inglis has been achieving in the early detection of bacterial infection and drug resistance, the FAST system. Tim has been looking into early detection of viruses specifically CoVid-19 utilising the FAST system which he has re-purposed.

CoCo Study (Tobias Kollmann)

The CoCo study is currently in discussion with the funders to ascertain if the Telethon Kids Institute can conduct the trials overseas. Further information will follow once confirmation has been received.

4. Next Meeting

TBA